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# Dialogue on Diversity

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# University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



## Dialogue on Diversity

**09.25.2008 | Campus and Community, Culture and Society**

"Can We Talk About Race?"

A roomful of UD administrators and two race relations experts did just that Sept. 22 in an informal conversation about how to build a more inclusive campus community.

How do today's college students look past race and connect with one another?

"They don't," contends Beverly Daniels Tatum, president of Spelman College and author of *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* "We, as educators, have to be intentional in creating opportunities for white students to interact with black students. We should not expect that it will happen naturally."

Tatum and Westina Matthews Shatteen, a University of Dayton graduate and trustee and managing director of community business development for Merrill Lynch, both experts in race relations, are traveling the country talking about the challenges of diversity in higher education and the corporate world. The program is sponsored by Merrill Lynch.

For diversity, "it's the best of times and the worst of times" in the United States, according to Tatum. Barack Obama's nomination for president indicates "a lot of progress," (but) "if you look at public education today, most schools are as segregated as they were 30 years ago. As more and more (school districts) have moved away from busing as a policy, the neighborhoods have remained segregated, so the schools have turned to segregated."

On the flip side, many of the African-American students that private universities such as UD attract have attended wealthier suburban schools and enjoyed "all the amenities and extras their parents could give them," said Shatteen, noting that they've not always learned to interact with others who didn't have the same privileges.

Tatum left administrators with three tactics for creating a stronger, more inclusive campus community—affirm identity, build community and cultivate leadership.

For college students, "these are years of identity development. ... We're always looking for clues. Is this a place where people like me are welcome?" Tatum noted. "Our efforts to build community really only work if people feel their perspectives will be included. In cultivating leadership, we need to develop the capacity to think about the questions, 'Who is missing from the picture,' and, 'What should I do about it?'"

Is race one of those taboo topics, like religion and politics?

"Should we talk about race? We can't solve the problems we have without talking," Tatum said.